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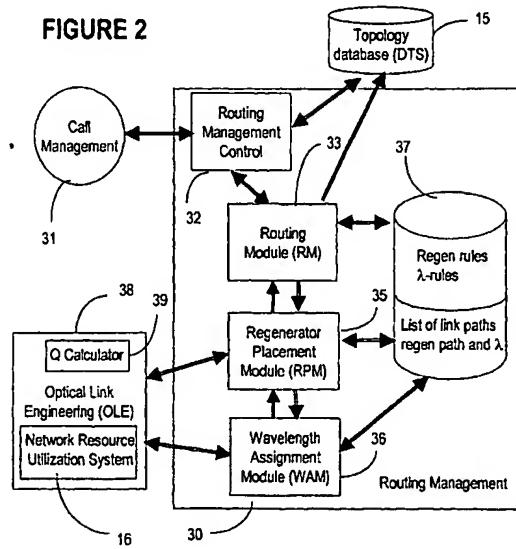
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(54) Wavelength routing and switching mechanism for a photonic transport network

(57) A connection between a source node and a destination node is automatically routed and switched in a WDM photonic network 1, on receipt of a connection request. A switching and routing mechanism selects a plurality of valid link paths using a path tree, where invalid branches are eliminated based on constraints received with the connection request, and on a link and path cost functions. A regenerator placement tree 25 is used for determining a plurality of viable regenerator paths for each valid link path. On the regenerator placement tree 25, non-viable branches are eliminated based on constraints received with the request and on regenerator availability at the intermediate nodes along the respective path. Next, the switching and routing mechanism assigns a set of wavelengths to each viable regenerator path, and estimates the performance of the path using a Q calculator 39. The regenerator paths are ordered according to their performance and the switching and routing mechanism 30 attempts to setup a path to serve the request.

FIGURE 2



Description**Field of the invention**

- 5 [0001] The invention is directed to a telecommunication network, and in particular to a wavelength routing and switching mechanism for a photonic network.

Background of the invention

- 10 [0002] The most relevant trends in the optical networking area are the increase in the network capacity and the increase in transmission reach. In response to the exponential growth of Internet use throughout the world, carriers are installing DWDM (dense wavelength division multiplexing) networks, and attempting to scale-up the existing networks by addition of equipment to support new services. It is estimated that expansion of long haul optical communication networks will be in the order of 70-150%, fueled by ever-growing data, and lately video, traffic. Currently, this expansion continues mostly based on improvements to the current transport technologies.
- 15 [0003] Carriers are also installing ultra-long reach networks, where regeneration of the signal is effected at 3,000km or more. The ultra long reach was enabled, among other factors, by the advances in transmitter and receiver design, evolution of optical amplification, employment of distributed Raman amplification combined with various dispersion compensation techniques, new encoding and modulation techniques, digital wrapper technology, etc.
- 20 [0004] However, the current D/WDM networks use point-to-point (pt-pt) connectivity, which means that all channels are OEO (optical-to-electrical-to-optical) converted at each node, which results in very complex and expensive node configurations. On the other hand, a service needs to be established between two end nodes so that in the majority of cases, OEO conversion at the intermediate nodes adds unjustifiable costs and complexity to the network.
- 25 [0005] In addition, a point-to-point connectivity impacts negatively on the service activation time, or "time to bandwidth" (TTB). Currently, the waiting time for a new optical service in pt-pt networks is over 120 days. TTB includes two components, the network engineering time and the service activation time.
- [0006] Network engineering includes generating a physical link and node design that will deliver on the specified network performance so that the provisioning application can establish optimal network operation. The output of the engineering stage feeds into the order process with detailed equipment lists and specifications along with configurations so that the installers know exactly where everything needs to be placed. A pt-pt architecture requires very complex network engineering and planning, resulting in large system turn-up time (in the order of months), involving extensive simulation, engineering and testing. In addition, the pt-pt network requires duplication of equipment for protection/restoration in case of a fault, and, as indicated above equipment for unnecessary OEO conversion.
- 30 [0007] There is a need to provide a more efficient use of the equipment in the current D/WDM network.
- 35 [0008] There is a need to break the wavelength engineering bottleneck currently constraining the engineering-to-provisioning ratio, and for wavelengths to become available as a network resource deployable across the network.
- [0009] If the equipment required to provision a new service is in place, TTB comprises only the service activation time, which includes, besides the time for back office activity and the time for connecting the equipment, the time needed for activating the service. Adding new services in a pt-pt architecture becomes more complex as the number of channels in the network grows, and therefore costly. Furthermore, as the network evolves from linear or ring configurations to mesh connectivity, automation of services becomes a difficult task.
- 40 [0010] There is a need to provide a network with the ability to automatically route and switch channels from a source node to a destination node with efficient use of OEO conversion.

45 Summary of the Invention

- [0011] It is an object of this invention to provide a method for automatically routing and switching a connection between any two switching nodes of a photonic network. In order to achieve this, a novel network architecture is necessary, that simplifies network engineering and planning and allows automation of services. In this new architecture, the wavelengths become provisioned units, and the network provides a new service layer for the wavelength-level services.
- 50 [0012] Accordingly, the invention provides a method for automatically routing and switching a connection in a WDM network, comprising: receiving a request for connecting a source node and a destination node; engineering a plurality of viable regenerator paths between the source and destination nodes, based on constraints in the request and on current network configuration and loading; and selecting a best path from the plurality of regenerator paths to serve the connection.
- 55 [0013] According to another aspect of the invention, automatically routing and switching a connection in a WDM network includes: engineering a plurality of viable regenerator paths between a source and a destination node, based on user constraints, current network configuration and on regenerator placement rules; assigning a set of wavelengths

to each the viable regenerator path based on wavelength rules and on current network loading; and selecting a best path from the plurality of regenerator paths to serve the connection.

[0014] The invention is also directed to a routing manager for a photonic WDM network comprising: a routing module RM for constructing 'n' different valid link paths between a source and a destination nodes; a regenerator placement module RPM for engineering 'm' groups of viable regenerator paths for each link path, each path having 'k' regenerators; a wavelength assignment module WAM for assigning a set of wavelengths to each the viable regenerator path; and a control unit for receiving a request for establishing a connection between the source node and the destination node and managing operation of the RM, the RPM and the WAM for selecting a best path available for the connection.

[0015] According to still another aspect of the invention, a connection is automatically switched and routed over a reconfigurable photonic network by maintaining updated information on status and operation parameters of a bank of wavelength-converter/regenerator devices connected in stand-by at a plurality of switching nodes of the photonic network; investigating availability of the devices to locate a device based on the updated information; and switching the device into a communication path according to a current performance parameter of the communication path.

[0016] A method of engineering a plurality of regenerator paths between a source node and a destination node of a photonic switched network is also presented. This is accomplished by constructing a plurality of viable regenerator paths, based on current network topology data, operational parameters of all regenerators available in the WDM network, network loading data and user constraints; and selecting a best path from the plurality of regenerator paths to serve the connection.

[0017] Advantageously, the wavelength routing and switching mechanism (WRSM) according to the invention offers flexibility of provisioning in that it allows automatic wavelength route selection and path setup across the network infrastructure. The route selection is based on optical constraints, in that it works with real time photonic path and link budgets. WRSM reacts according to these budgets, balancing the network and utilizing regenerative elements where/when necessary.

[0018] A photonic network equipped with the WRSM of the invention allows important cost savings, as a network provider is not required any more to buy extra capacity for future services at the time of network deployment. This is because physical wavelength interfaces are now engineered elements, which do not need to be re-engineered during the provisioning process; the wavelengths can be deployed independent of their provisioning information. The network can be scaled-up only when needed, and the actual provisioning of the wavelength interface can be performed remotely, without human intervention at the physical interface by a simple dial.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0019] The foregoing and other objects, features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following more particular description of the preferred embodiments, as illustrated in the appended drawings, where:

Figure 1 shows the general architecture for a photonic network to which the present invention is applicable;
 Figure 2 shows the main modules involved in the routing and switching services within the network of Figure 1, and their interaction;
 Figures 3A and 3B show the operation of the routing module, where Figure 3A shows an example of a path search tree, and Figure 3B is a flow chart illustrating the operation of the routing module;
 Figures 4A and 4B show the operation of the regenerator placement module, where Figure 4A shows an example of regenerator availability, and Figure 4B is a flow chart illustrating the operation of the regenerator placement module;
 Figure 5A shows a regenerator placement search tree;
 Figure 5B shows an example of how the regenerator paths are sorted;
 Figure 6A shows an example of selecting a regenerator path;
 Figure 6B shows how a regenerator path is selected in the example of Figure 6A according to cost and Q value;
 Figure 6C shows a Q - probability of success graph used for expediting path ordering;
 Figure 7 is a flow chart showing in more detail the step of path ordering of Figure 3B;
 Figures 8A, 8B and 8C show the operation of the wavelength assignment module; where Figure 8A illustrates the flow chart of the operation in the wavelength assignment module; Figures 8B and 8B show wavelength segmentation; and
 Figure 9 illustrates upgrading wavelengths selection.

Description of the Preferred Embodiments

[0020] Figure 1 shows an example of a photonic network 1, to which the present invention applies. The DWDM layer of network 1 is mesh-connected with flexibility points instead of traditional pt-pt nodes.

[0021] Such a network is illustrated in Figure 1. The architecture and operation of this network is described in co-pending Application "Architecture for a photonic transport network" (Roorda et al), serial number not yet available, docket #1001, filed on June 7, 2001, which is incorporated herein by reference.

docket #1001, filed on June 7, 2001, which is incorporated herein by reference.

[0022] To summarize, network 1 comprises bidirectional fiber links 10 connecting a plurality of nodes, which are nodes A, B, C, D, E, F, Z, OADM (optical add/drop multiplexing) nodes C, D, and bidirectional optical amplifiers 8 which condition the optical signals. Local traffic 16 originating and terminating on a service platform 7 (e.g. a router, an ATM switch, an EXC, etc.) accesses the network 1 at a switching node or an OADM node (also called flexibility sites).

[0023] The optical network 1 may be partitioned into the following building blocks, which function together or, in some applications, independently:

- a) Electro-optics 5, provided for example at a switching node and an OADM node. The electro-optics system 5 performs on/off ramp of client signals onto/from the optical network and interfaces into the access multiplexing and switching systems of the network. System 5 may include for each express fiber a pool of transponders (TR), and a pool of wavelength converters/regenerators (regens). Transponders 13,13' are interfaces between the network and the service platform 7. Regenerators 12 provide OEO-based wavelength conversion and/or regeneration in the network core. Also, the transmitters for both the transponders and regenerators are tunable, allowing for flexibility in selecting an A-Z path and the wavelength for that path.
 - b) Wavelength switches 2 are provided at switching nodes, and optical add/drop multiplexers 3 are provided at OADM nodes. Switches 2 and optical add/drop multiplexers 3 provide optical passthru, (bypassing OEO conversions), and optical add/drop of the local traffic from/to the electro-optics 5.
 - c) Access multiplexing/demultiplexing and switching subsystem 4 is provided at switching nodes, and at some OADM nodes, such as node C. The access subsystem routes the add and drop channels between the electro-optics sub-system 5 and the respective switch 2 or OADM 3. It distributes individual wavelengths from the line system to the transponders/regenerators, and aggregates individual wavelengths from the transponders/ regenerators onto the line system.
 - d) Optical line subsystem post/pre amplification and line amplifier subsystem 8 is provided on the links between the nodes. It comprises post, pre and line amplifiers and the associated dispersion and power management equipment necessary for ultra-long haul propagation along the line.

[0024] Network 1 is scalable; if new fibers are added between the flexibility sites, the respective optical amplifiers and the associated dispersion and power management equipment can be readily connected at an OA site by adding a respective amplifier shelf, etc. As well, nodes may be scaled-up by adding modules to the respective switch, OADM, access system as/when needed.

[0025] A signalling and control system SCS 9 is provided between all nodes and the optical line subsystem. SCS 9 allows topology discovery and fault monitoring, and photonic layer network management. As new resources are added to the network, system 9 updates the network topology database 12 with the new resources, their location and connectivity, operating parameters, etc. It is to be noted that while the database 12 is shown as a unique block, instances of this database are available at each node. Based on this topology information, a network and element management system 11 monitors and controls operation of the network nodes and their connectivity, and provides node and network inventory data and various metrics. This information is stored for both current and future use in a network topology database NTD 15. It is to be noted that this database is not necessarily provided on a unique hardware support as shown, and it can be distributed between the nodes.

[0026] The network is also provided with a system for monitoring network resources utilization (NRU) shown generally at 16. System 16 uses the resource data from the network topology database 15 and monitors the utilization of these resources using pre-set thresholds. Whenever a threshold is violated, an alarm is provided on terminal 14 at a network operations center NOC 17, so that the network resources can be re-deployed for optimal utilization, if possible. If after the optimization attempt, some resources are still under-provisioned, the operator may place a purchase order in advance from the time when the respective resources are indeed needed.

55 on the route of that channel, and allocates the regenerator to the respective path to process the signal according to [0028] Figure 2 illustrates a logical overview of the modules of the network and element management system 11, which are involved in wavelength routing and switching. This figure also shows the interaction between the modules. [0029] The term "A-Z path" refers to a connection between a source node, generically referred to as node A, and a

destination node, generically referred as node **Z**.

[0030] A call management block **31** provides a routing management platform **30** with a connection request. The request can also be referred to as a "dial", "redial" or "call", and refer in this context to a request for a new connection between source node **A** and sink node, **Z**. A request defines certain conditions, and generally includes some constraints, set according to the class of services applicable to the respective user.

[0031] Routing management platform **30** comprises a routing module **RM 33**, a regenerator placement module **RPM 35** and a wavelength assignment module **WAM 36**. A routing management controller **32** receives the call from block **31**, operates modules **RM 33**, **RPM 35** and **WAM 36** to generate a list of possible best paths. The regenerator placement module **35** orders the path according to their chances of success and maintains this list until a path is successfully setup. It presents the paths from the list, one by one, to the call management **31**, which in turn attempts to set-up a path. If the first path on the list fails, the call management **31** requests the next path from the **RMC 32** the next path, and so on, until a path is successful.

[0032] A Q calculator **39** is available for use by the modules of the routing management **30**, as it will be seen as the description proceeds. The Q calculator is a module provided by an optical engineering platform **38**, for estimating a Q quality factor based upon knowledge of the topology and characteristics of the network. It encapsulates the physics of the propagation of signals through equipment and tries to estimate the amount of distortion to a signal due to physical effects, such as cross-talk between wavelengths, to produce an estimate of the quality of the signal referred to as the Q factor.

[0033] Routing module **33** is responsible for finding '*n*' number of paths, also called link paths, between source node **A**, and destination node **Z**. The term 'link path' is intended to indicate that each such A-Z connection is comprised of a different succession of links between end node **A** and **Z**. While '*N*' link paths may be available for an A-Z connection, only '*n*' link paths are selected in the first instance by the routing module **33**. The number '*n*' can be selected by the user, based for example on the overall system cost versus the setup time. The examples shown assume that *n*=4. **RM 33** operates according to a set of constraints, which are received with a service request from a call management block **31**, as it will be seen later under the title "Routing Module".

[0034] Regenerator placement module **35** is responsible for determining '*m*' sets of regenerator paths for each link path. A set comprises all regenerator paths with the same number '*k*' of regenerators, each having the respective '*k*' regenerators placed at a different combination of '*k*' nodes. For example, a 1st set may have no regenerators, a 2nd set may have one regenerator, etc. The maximum number of regenerators in a set is given by the number of intermediate nodes. While '*M*' sets may be available for a link path, **RPM 35** only selects '*m*' sets in the first instance. The number '*m*' is again chosen by the user, based upon the loss calculated along the path, or using a more sophisticated Q estimation, based upon the required setup time. The examples shown below assume *m*=4. **Module 35** operates based on regenerator placement constraints or rules **37** to select the best regenerator path for the respective service request, as it will be seen later under the title "Regenerator Placement Module".

[0035] The wavelength assignment module **36** is responsible with finding a single end-to-end wavelength, or a set of wavelengths for each selected regenerator path based again on wavelength constraints or rules **37**. **Module 36** also provides a wavelength upgrade path for the 0-regenerator and 1-regenerator paths, and upgrades the weakest link (flexibility point-to-flexibility point) for the regenerator paths with *k*>2, as it will be seen later under the title "Wavelength Assignment Module".

40 *Routing Module 33*

[0036] The routing module **33** of Figure 2 operates as described next in connection with Figures 2, 3A and 3B. Figure 3A shows an example of a path search tree, and Figure 3B is a flow chart illustrating the operation of the routing module.

[0037] As shown in Figure 3B, a request is received from the call management **31** for an A-Z path, step **40**. Routing module **33** declares node **A** as the root node, step **41**. For the general case, we denote the root node with **R(i)** and the links originating in a node are denoted with **L(j)**. It is to be noted that call management **31** works always with the routing module **33** of the root node **R(i)**.

[0038] Next, **RM 33** builds a search tree **ST** as in the example of Figure 3A, using topology data imported from the database **15**, as shown at **15'**, and applying any constraints that were specified with the path request, steps **42**, **43**. **Module 33** also associates a link weighting function to each link **L(j)**, as shown in step **44**. The weights are denoted with **LW(j)**, and may be defined as shown in EQ1 by way of example.

55

$$\begin{aligned} \text{LW}(j) = & (\text{link length} * \text{link cost}) + (\text{estimated link equipment cost}) + \\ & (\alpha * \text{link loading cost}) + (\text{cost for type of fiber}) \end{aligned} \quad (\text{EQ1})$$

where:

α is a binary threshold based on the load of the link. α is set to '0' or '1' and the correct setting at which α becomes '1' is to be determined by simulating various network topologies with various loading thresholds. For example, if the link-loading threshold has been set to 80%, then whilst the link is less than 80% loaded this parameter is 0. Once the link load increases above 80%, α becomes 1.

5 'Link weighting cost' is defined as the total cost of using the link. Link cost is the amortized cost given per unit of link length (e.g. km).

'Link length' is the physical length of the link. The purpose of this parameter is to bias connections towards shorter routes.

10 'Estimated equipment cost of link' takes into account only equipment along the link, i.e. the line subsystem (optical amplifiers, DCMs, etc.).

'Link loading cost' is defined as the average percentage load on a link. For example, if there are 5 fibers between two flexibility points, the average loading cost is the average cost across these 5 fibers. The purpose of this parameter is to move traffic away from the most heavily used routes as the network fills up. Other criteria may be envisaged to 15 estimate link loading cost.

15 [0039] Amortized 'cost for type of fiber' is associated with the type of fiber along the link e.g. LEAF™, True-Wave™ classic, etc.

[0040] Shown in dotted lines on Figure 3B is a variant of path processing, whereby if the LW(j) is higher than a threshold, step 45, the respective link is abandoned, step 47. In this variant, the weighting factor for the next link is calculated, in steps 43, 44, 45, until the weights for all links at the respective tree level and originating from the root R (i) are determined, branch NO of decision block 45 and branch YES of decision block 46. The threshold can be for example a maximum cost for a certain class of service associated with the call (i.e. privileges for the user who placed the request). The threshold can also be a minimum value.

20 [0041] Variants where all links are processed are also possible, in which case block 45 is not necessary.

25 [0042] If all links from a root node were processed, module 33 determines if node Z was reached, step 48, and if not, it moves to the next node at the same level of the tree, or at the next level, step 50. Operations 42- 48 are repeated for these levels of the tree ST, and for all nodes at the level.

[0043] Once node Z is reached, meaning that an A to Z link path was found, as shown by branch YES of decision block 48, a path weight PW(i) is calculated for the respective link path, and the path is stored, step 49. PW(i) may again 30 be a cost function for the final path, which could be defined for example as:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{PW}(i) = & (\text{ingress node cost}) + (\text{egress node cost}) + \\ & (\text{estimated regen costs for path}) + \Sigma (\text{link weight costs}), \end{aligned} \quad (\text{EQ2})$$

35

where,

'Ingress Node Cost' is the amortized cost associated with node A, i.e. the cost of the transponder.

'Egress Node Cost' is the amortized cost associated with node Z, i.e. the cost of the transponder.

40 'Estimated regen costs for the path' is estimated for example by considering that a regenerator must be inserted in the path every 3000km. This cost is also amortized. It is to be understood that this distance is given here as a practical example for explaining the operation of the RM 33; the reach of a regenerator depends on the particular regenerator used. Furthermore, it is possible to extend the estimated regenerator cost to other regenerator types; for example, a hybrid RZ/NRZ type may be used. Nonetheless, the type and reach of the regenerators are irrelevant to the invention, 45 it is important to correctly estimate the cost taking into account the available devices. It is also possible to use a Q estimation for the path in order to determine the number of regenerators needed and their cost.

'Link weight costs' are the weights LW(j) assigned to each link along the path. These are summed and added to the path cost.

50 [0044] The next path is determined in same way, until 'n' link paths are constructed and stored, as shown by branch NO of decision blocks 51, 52.

[0045] In the event that 'n' link paths cannot be found due to physical constraints or because the weight function for a particular request is exceeded on all remaining branches of the search tree, branch NO of decision blocks 51, and a branch YES of decision block 52, less than 'n' link paths that have been found are given to the regenerator placement module 36. This is shown by branch NO of decision block 54. In the case that no path at all could be found after the entire search tree has been examined, the network and element manager 11 provides the operator at NOC 17 with appropriate alarms, branch YES of decision block 54.

[0046] Once all 'n' (or less) link paths are built, and the associated path weights PW are calculated, the link paths are passed to the regenerator placement module 35 and wavelength assignment module 36, step 53.

[0047] It is possible to apply another mechanism to obtain one path only. For example, a shortest path first algorithm may be used, in which case the path weight may be calculated using EQ3:

$$\begin{aligned}
 5 & FW(i) = (\text{ingress node cost}) + (\text{egress node cost}) + (\text{estimated regen} \\
 & \text{costs for path}) + \sum [(\text{link length} * \text{link cost}) + (\text{estimated link equipment} \\
 & \text{cost}) + (\alpha * \text{link loading cost}) + (\text{cost for type of fiber})] \quad \text{EQ3}
 \end{aligned}$$

10 [0048] Again, it is to be noted that the above equations are provided by way of example, any other ways of determining an estimated cost for the path(s) may be equally used.

15 [0049] If RPM 35 and the WAM 36 cannot find a feasible route, branch NO of decision block 55, module 33 continues to build the search tree, by returning to step 52, to find another link path. If the regenerator placement and wavelength assignment have been successful, the paths found after step 55 are ordered in step 56, as it will be seen in connection with Figure 7. The ordered paths are returned to routing management control 32, step 57, which presents them in sequential order to the call management 31, step 58. Now, the network and element management system 11 can initiate physical implementation (lighting the A-Z path). System 11 tries to set-up the paths starting with the best path on the list, and if path set-up is successful, branch YES of decision block 59, RM 33 destroys the stored paths, step 20 20. On the other hand, if the path cannot be set-up, the next best path is tried, steps 91 and 50. If no path from the paths list can be set-up, branch YES of decision block 50, the operator at NOC 17 or the setup software in the case of a UNI request is informed of this failure.

25 [0050] The routing management platform 30 also takes into consideration the type of protection associated with an A-Z request. A 0:2 path request is handled as two 0:1 requests. This means that for a 0:2 path request, the routing management platform will first find a principal A-Z path, and then provide this principal path back to the routing module 33 as a constraint, so that the module finds a secondary path. Persons skilled in the art will be aware of other approaches to find 0:2 path directly instead of using two 0:1 path requests with constraints. One approach is to find a cycle within the topology graph which includes the source and destination nodes. By splitting the cycle into two paths starting at the source node and ending at the destination node the 0:2 path can be obtained. Another approach would be to use a Ford-Fulkerson augmented path algorithm to find a 2 unit flow from source node to destination node and then use a tree search technique to find two paths between the source node and the destination node. This approach has the advantage that it can be extended to find 0:k paths where the Ford-Fulkerson augmented path algorithm is used to find a k unit flow from source node to destination node followed by a tree search technique to find k paths.

30 [0051] The routing module 33 supports two different scenarios with respect to selection of the end transponders, depending if the transponders are pre-provisioned or not.

35 [0052] In the case where the transponders are pre-provisioned, the route selection is constrained at the source node A and sink node Z. That is, the first link between node A and the first intermediate node along the path is fixed; flexibility of routing commences only after the first intermediate node. Also, since the end transponder at node Z is pre-provisioned, routing must ensure that the path enters site Z on the side where the sink transponder is connected.

40 [0053] In the case where the transponders are post-provisioned (floating case) routing is not constrained at either the beginning or end of the path, and module 33 makes the decision as to which transponder to use.

Regenerator Placement Module

45 [0054] Figures 4A and 4B show the operation of the regenerator placement module 35. Figure 4A gives an example of the type and number of regenerators available at flexibility sites A, B, C, D, and Z along a link-path A-Z, and Figure 4B illustrates the flow chart with the operation of the regenerator placement module 35 for the example of Figure 4A.

50 [0055] In this example, there are two types of regenerators available, a RZ-type (return-to-zero encoding of data) regenerator and a NRZ-type (non-return-to-zero) regenerator. Each type has a different reach, and for the purpose of illustration, let's consider that the reach of the NRZ regenerators is approximately 1500km and the reach of RZ regenerators is approximately 3000km. Also, let's assume that a NRZ regenerator costs half of the price of a RZ regenerator; both regenerator reach and cost are taken into consideration by module 35.

55 [0056] As seen in Figure 4B, a link path selected by routing module 33 is input first to module 35, as seen in steps 53 on Figure 3B. The regenerator availability data is provided by DTS 15, step 60, and module 35 attempts to find viable regenerator paths, steps 61, 62.

[0057] The regenerator placement module 35 attempts to place the regenerators in the most optimal position along the link path by building a 'regenerator availability tree' or 'regenerator tree' 25 as shown in Figure 5A. As the name suggests, the tree provides a list of valid regenerator vs. reach combinations. The regenerator tree has 'branches' for

all possible combinations of number (k) and positions of regenerators for the respective link path. In other words, the module analyzes all variants with a regenerator at the first level of the tree, in this example node **B** (branch 71), node **C** (branch 72), node **D** (branch 21), or no regenerators at all (branch 22). Next, module 35 tries all variants with a regenerator at the second level of the tree, which are: from node **B**, a regenerator at node **C** (branch 74), or at node **D** (branch 75), or a branch going directly to end node **Z** (branch 73). Similarly, regenerator paths are formed with a first regenerator at node **C**, and the second level providing for a regenerator at node **D** (branch 26) or going directly to node **Z** (branch 27). The third level is constructed in the same manner, and it includes branches 76, 79, 78, and 28, while level four includes only branch 77.

[0058] At the same time, the module abandons the branches that are not viable, based on the regenerator availability, type and reach of the end transponders and regenerators at the intermediate nodes. A variant is 'viable' and declared a 'regenerator path' for a given link path, if the optical signal originating at node **A** can reach node **Z** with or without regenerators switched in the link path.

[0059] In the example of Figure 5A, valid variants for the first level are the regenerator paths including branch 71 to node **B** and branch 72 to node **C**, which nodes are at a 2000km and respectively 3000km distance from node **A**. The signal from node **A** cannot reach node **D** or **Z** without regeneration, since distances A-D and A-Z are greater than the reach of an RZ transponder. Therefore branches such as 21 are invalid, and they are not pursued further.

[0060] In addition, as the distance A-B is 2000km, the transponder at node **A** needs to be of RZ type, which has a reach of 3000km, rather than of NRZ type, which cannot reach node **B**. Therefore branches like 23 are also abandoned. The abandoned branches are crossed with an X in Figure 5A. It is noted that the type and reach data specified above are by way of example to show how the viable regenerator paths are selected.

[0061] As discussed above, the type of transmitter at the beginning of the path determines the type of regenerator (s) that can be used along the entire path. For example, since the transponder at **A** needs to be of type RZ to reach node **B**, any regenerators used along this regenerator path must be of the RZ type. Nonetheless, module 35 is free to choose the equipment type after the tree was built if both a NRZ and RZ regenerator paths were found (not in the example of Figure 4A).

[0062] By applying reach and type constraints to the example of Figure 4A and abandoning the paths that are not viable, (marked by 'X's on Figure 5A), five viable regenerator paths may be constructed for the example of Figure 4A, and they are shown in Figure 5B. Of course, the viable regenerator paths may be determined using a variety of alternative techniques, including a wave propagation simulation, or a Q estimation; the intent is to determine if 'branches' can transport the signal from the source to destination.

[0063] Returning to Figure 4B, module 35 groups the regenerator paths into ' m ' sets, where preferably $m=4$, step 63. However, in the example analyzed here, there are only three sets available ($m=3$), shown in Figure 5B, namely a 1st set with the 1st path having one regenerator ($k=1$), a 2nd set with the 2nd, 3rd and 4th paths having each two regenerators ($k=2$), and a 3rd set with the 5th path having three regenerators ($k=3$). In this case, as in other circumstances where the module cannot return the ' m ' sets, the module processes further as many regenerator paths as it can build. Reasons for not finding ' m ' regenerator paths could be for example too few intermediate nodes on the respective link path (e.g. k is maximum 3 in the example of Figure 3A), a path for $k=0$ is not viable (i.e. the length of the path is greater than the reach of the transponder at node **A**), etc.

[0064] There could also be cases where no sets with $k=0$ or 1 are possible. In such cases, module 35 starts building a first set with 2 regenerators, a second set with 3 regenerators, a third set with 4 regenerators and a fourth set with 5 regenerators. Alternatively, the cases for $k=0,1$ may not be considered altogether, to reduce the time for path selection.

[0065] Returning now to Figure 5B, module 35 operates on three sets, as four sets are not available in this example. Since the 2nd set comprises three regenerator paths, a determination of the best regenerator path needs to be made module assigns wavelength for all paths, as shown in step 64, Figure 4B. It is to be noted that step 64 is further detailed in Figure 6B.

[0066] In a 0-regenerator case (not shown in Figure 5B as it is not applicable to the above example) a continuous wavelength must be assigned to the entire regenerator path, since there is no opportunity for wavelength conversion between nodes **A** and **Z**. The term 'continuous wavelength' is used for a segment of a path, which uses the same carrier wavelength along all links; the wavelength changes at a regenerator site provided with a wavelength converter.

[0067] On the other hand, for the regenerator paths of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd sets, it is less desirable to use a continuous wavelength from A-Z, in order to reduce wavelength fragmentation; the continuous wavelength paths are required primarily for 0-regenerator cases. Therefore, module 36 assigns to regenerator paths wavelengths that are already fragmented, since the opportunity to change the wavelengths along such a path is always available at the regenerator sites.

[0068] Let's assume that module 36 located a plurality of fragmented wavelengths for each regenerator path; the reference numerals above the connections between the nodes of Figure 5B, which identify the tree branches in Figure 5A, correspond to a certain distinct wavelength.

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[0069] The prioritization of the paths in a set may be performed based on the minimum Q value of the path, steps 65, 66. In this case, Q value is first estimated at each regenerator site and at the end transponder, using Q calculator 39 provided by the optical link engineering module (OLE) 38 (see Figure 2). An example of Q values is shown on Figure 5B for all regenerator nodes and the end node Z.

5 [0070] The Q_{est_min} of the respective paths is determined as being the lowest Q value calculated along the path, since a path is only as strong as its weakest link. The Q_{est_min} value for the paths in the example of Figure 5B are 4.0 for the 2nd path, 4.0 for the 3rd path and 4.5 for the 4th path. The path with the highest Q_{est_min} value in the 2nd set is the 4th path ($Q=4.5$) in this case.

10 [0071] The paths in each set (here in the 2nd set) are next ordered by the path cost, step 67. As indicated above, the price of an RZ regenerator is assumed to be considerably greater than the price of an NRZ regenerator. However, all paths in the above example use RZ regenerators, so that the paths in the 2nd set have the same cost, let's say \$200,000.

[0072] Alternatively, the paths may be ordered first by the cost and then by Q_{est_min} .

15 [0073] The number of regenerators available at each site is next considered, step 68; these numbers are shown in Figure 4A. Again, since only RZ regenerators are being considered in this example, the number of NRZ regens available has no bearing. To reiterate, the 2nd path requires an RZ regenerator at node B and one at node C, the 3rd path requires an RZ regenerator at node B and one at node D, and the 4th path requires an RZ regenerator at node C and one at node D. Since there are fewer RZ regenerators available at node D (7) than at node B (8) in this example, the 2nd path is better than the 4th path. Since there are fewer regenerators available at site D than at site C, the 2nd path is better than the 3rd path. The 2nd path is therefore the best choice for the 2nd set, and the 4th path is the second choice from regenerator availability point of view.

20 [0074] A weighting function is employed at step 69, which sorts the regenerator paths taking into account the estimated Q values, the path cost, and the regenerator availability. Below is an example of such a cost function:

25

$$(Ordered\ Path\ Weighting) = (\alpha * Q\ balance) + (\beta * Regen\ cost)$$

$$+ (\delta * Regen\ availability), \quad (EQ4)$$

30

[0075] Where:

α = Weighted % for Q balance importance in biasing selection

β = Weighted % for Regen cost importance in biasing selection

δ = Weighted % for Regen availability in biasing selection

35

[0076] For example, $\alpha = 50\%$, $\beta = 50\%$ and $\delta = 0\%$. Also, the percentage splits for both the Q balance ordering and the regenerator cost ordering could be:

40 1st place = 50% of the weight

2nd place = 30% of the weight

3rd place = 10% of the weight

4th place = 8% of the weight

5th place = 2% of the weight

6th place and worse = 0% of the weight.

45

[0077] Evaluating the results from the Q balance ordering and the regenerator cost ordering, and putting these results into EQ4, the best regenerator path of the 2nd set is the 4th path. If a regenerator path in the set has the same path weight as another, then an arbitrary decision is made as to which regenerator path to use for that set.

50

[0078] Namely, a Q balance of 50% total path weight contribution, gives a weight of 25% to 4th path (50% of the 50%) since it came 1st, and gives a weight of 7.5% to 2nd and 3rd paths.

[0079] The weight of the regenerator cost is the same for all paths, namely 8.333% (50% total path weight contribution).

[0080] As for this example $\gamma=0$, regenerator availability is not considered, for simplicity. Therefore the total weights are, from EQ4:

55

2nd path = $7.5 + 8.333 = 15.833$

3rd path = $7.5 + 8.333 = 15.833$

4th path = $25 + 8.333 = 33.33$

- [0081] EQ4 results in selection of the 4th path as the best path in the 2nd set.
- [0082] Ideally, the output of step 69 in the flowchart of Figure 4B, are 'n' link paths, each with 'm' sets of regenerator paths, which are returned to the route management control 32. If path selection, regenerator placement and wavelength assignment have been successful, the paths must be ordered as shown in step 56 of Figure 3B.
- 5 [0083] Ordering of the paths can be for example based on the path cost and Q performance, as shown in Figures 6A, 6B, 6C and 7. Figure 6A shows an example of a final path vs. regenerator matrix, which in this case has 32 cells. Figure 6B shows how a regenerator path is selected in the example of Figure 6A according to cost and Q value and Figure 6C shows a Q - probability of success graph used for expediting path ordering.
- 10 [0084] The matrix of Figure 6A is ordered in terms of lowest cost, step 101 in Figure 7. The entry point to this matrix is always the lowest cost path (as determined by applying the cost function EQ3), which is placed in the top left hand corner 80 of the matrix. The number of all possible link and regenerator path combinations is $n \times m$, which is 16 for the preferred 'n' and 'm' values ($n=m=4$). The term 'wavelength upgrade' refers in this specification to re-assigning another wavelength to a regenerator segment, selected to perform better than the current wavelength. Specifically, some wavelengths can reach further than others; the performance of a wavelength also depends on the spacing between the channels on the respective regenerator segment.
- 15 [0085] In this example, upgrades are provided for 0-regenerator and 1-regenerator paths; for the 0-regenerator paths there is only one possible upgrade path and for the 1-regenerator path there are three possible upgrade combinations. This means that in the 0-regenerator and 1-regenerator cases, there are additional 4 path sets for each of the 4 paths; giving a final matrix of size 32. In the case where the first regenerator path set had 2 or more regenerators, a wavelength 20 upgrade will only be provided for the weakest segment along the path; hence, in this case the final matrix will have less than 32 cells. It should be noted that in the 2 or more regenerator case all wavelengths along the path could be upgraded and in this case the final matrix would have more than 32 cells.
- 25 [0086] The ideal method for finding the best available solution for the A-Z path is to attempt to set-up all paths in steps 59 of Figure 3B, starting with the lowest cost path and working towards the highest cost path which also has a higher Q value and hence a greater chance of success. The duration of these operations impact on the total time for setting-up the new service. If we assume that the path set-up time is 8 seconds and the path tear-down time is 4 seconds (12 seconds for a try), trying all paths could take a waiting time of $32 \times 12 = 380$ seconds (6.333 minutes) for the worst case scenario when only the last path was found to work. It is to be noted that 4 seconds are deducted from the waiting time since there is no teardown time for the last path. As mentioned previously in the case where the 30 first regenerator path set is a set with two or more regenerators, there will be less than 32 cells, because all segments along the path will probably not have wavelength upgrades.
- 35 [0087] In the ideal case where there is time to try every path, path ordering starts by trying the 0 regenerator path shown at the top left hand corner of Figure 6A, and works through the matrix one row at a time from left to right until a path is successfully setup.
- 40 [0088] However, in the case that the customer is not willing to wait until all paths are tried, an alternative strategy may be employed, as illustrated in Figure 6A (by the arrows), Figure 6B, Figure 6C and shown by the steps of Figure 7.
- [0089] Figure 6B gives an example of costs and Q values of the 0 regenerator Path 1, Path 2 and Path 3 where $\text{Cost}_{P_1} = \text{Cost}_{P_2}$ and $\text{Cost}_{P_2} < \text{Cost}_{P_3}$, while $Q_{P_2} < Q_{P_1} < Q_{P_3}$. It is to be noted that the example of Figure 6A and 6B use the terms path 1, path 2, path 3 and path 4 for the link-paths; no confusion should be made with the 1st to 5th paths of Figure 5B.
- 45 [0090] Let's assume that path 1 does not work, in that the $Q_{\text{est_min}}$ value is 4.0 and a higher Q is requested. RM 33 checks next path 2. Path 2 has a lower $Q_{\text{est_min}}$ than path 1, hence a lower chance of success. Moving next to path 3, this has a Q value higher of that of path 1 and path 2, hence, path 3 is selected, even though the cost of this path is higher than that of path 2. The logic behind this is that since path 1 failed with a Q of 4.0, the chance of path 2 working is even lower since it has a Q of 3.8 and since the amount of time to find a workable solution is limited; the path selection process made must be moving towards a higher Q value and hence a greater probability of success. Path 3, 0 regenerators is thus the next path selected from the matrix.
- 50 [0091] Figure 6C extends this concept by introducing Q thresholds, which are defined to guide the selection process and reduce the waiting time necessary to find a workable path. For example, if the threshold is set between 4.0 and 7.0, then only paths with Q values above 4.0 will be tried, and the assumption made is that paths with a Q greater than 7.0 have a 99.99999% probability of success. As before, the $Q_{\text{est_min}}$ value for a path is the lowest Q value calculated along the path.
- 55 [0092] Making now the assumption that the maximum waiting time for a particular class of service is 104 seconds, for the worst-case scenario where the very last path tried is the one that works, 104 seconds would allow the system to try a total of S= 9 paths ($12 \times 9 - 4$) out of the 32 possible. This determination is shown in step 102 of Figure 7. In step 103, 'R' paths with the higher chances of success are selected out of all potential $n \times m$ paths (hereinafter called the 'best paths'). In the example of Figure 6A, 'R' is 4, and the four cells with higher probability of success are highlighted. The probability for success is given for example by:

$$P(\text{success}) = (R \text{ paths with } Q_{\text{est_min}} > Q_{\text{maintenance}} + Q_{\text{margin}}) \quad \text{EQ5}$$

[0093] Q_{margin} is a pre-determined, hard coded margin for success.

5 [0094] Next, in step 104, the remaining time is calculated, namely the difference between the waiting time and the effective time used by trying the 'R' best paths. In the example, the effective time is $t = 4x12-4=44$ seconds. Subtracting this from the waiting time gives an additional time of $(T-t)=104-44=60$ s. As testing a path takes 12s, and there are 60s left, this means that 5 additional paths (S-R) can be tested in the waiting time.

10 [0095] The selection criteria is taken one step further by attempting to space path selections evenly between the lower and upper Q thresholds and the number of paths which can be tried in the allowed time, as illustrated in Figure 6C. A probability of success versus Q value graph 18 may be employed to try and select paths on an evenly spaced basis from 4.0 to 7.0. In this example it is assumed that a path with a Q value above 7.0 will always work, and hence the highest probability paths selected are with Q values ≥ 7.0 . Also, for S-R = 5, we could try to select paths that have Q values at 0.5 intervals between 4.0 and 7.0. Figure 6C shows the selection for this example. Let's say that the paths selected are, in the order of cost and Q value: path 3, 0 regenerators; path 4, one regenerator; path 2, one regenerator, wavelength upgrade; path 1, one regenerator, wavelength upgrade; path 3, one regenerator, wavelength upgrade; and path 1, one regenerator, wavelength upgrade. The selection continues, and the next paths to be selected will most probably be the paths highlighted in Figure 6A.

15 [0096] Routing management 30 maintains the list of paths, as generically illustrated by database 37 on Figure 2. The final ordered path selections are returned sequentially by routing management control 32 to call management 31 in the determined order in which the path setup should be tried.

Wavelength assignment module 36

25 [0097] Figures 8A, 8B and 8C show the operation of the wavelength assignment module. Figure 8A illustrates the flow chart with the operation of the wavelength assignment module 36, and Figures 8B and 8C show a wavelength segmentation example.

30 [0098] The routing module 33 uses the wavelength assignment module 36 in conjunction with regeneration placement module 35, as shown in step 64, Figure 4B. The wavelength assignment module attempts to find a single wavelength or a set of wavelengths that would enable a connection along each of the regenerator paths. .

[0099] Wavelength Assignment module 36 provides the following functionality:

- Computes a route for working (and protection if required) traffic using the available resources.
- Computes the lowest cost route based on capacity utilization (optimal regenerator placement), OEO utilization, photonic constraints and administrative constraints, such as specific sites where regenerators must/must not be used.
- Considers a Wavelength Fill Sequence.
- Resolves wavelength blocking.
- Considers fiber types/ matching of fiber.
- A bandwidth reservation mechanism for both shared and dedicated restoration bandwidth considers predicted photonic performance at the time of restoration, in order to ensure a high probability of connection success during a restoration event.

40 [0100] Module 36 processes all regenerator paths 'm' for each of the 'n' link paths, and attempts to assign wavelengths to each path. Wavelength assignment starts by receiving the first regenerator path form module 35, step 90.

45 [0101] In the case of path sets with 0 regenerators, the selected wavelength must be continuous from A-Z. In a regenerator path with 'k' regenerators, up to $k+1$ wavelengths may be used. In the first instance of wavelength assignment on paths with 'k' regenerators, where $k>0$, access to wavelengths that are continuous from A-Z is initially restricted. The reason for this is that when a regenerator exists in the path, better use of network resources may be obtained by using shorter reach wavelengths.

50 [0102] Figures 8B and 8C show an example of wavelength segmentation, to better illustrate how module 36 operates. In the example shown in Figure 8B, λ_2 is already used between nodes A and B, and λ_3 is used between nodes B and Z (the used wavelengths are shown in dotted lines doubled by a solid line). While using a continuous wavelength λ_1 as shown for case 1 on Figure 8C without wavelength conversion at intermediate sites B, C, D is one solution, this option is initially restricted, as discussed above. Thus, a better solution in the case of a 1-regenerator path, is to place the regenerator at node B, as shown in Figure 8C, case 2, and to use λ_3 on link A-B and λ_2 on links B-C, C-D and D-Z, which is available on these links. Case 2 is preferable to case 1.

[0103] Preferably, wavelength assignment module 36 is provided with tables, step 92, giving a list with preferred channels versus loading and route lengths. Such tables may be provided for various types of fiber, and stored and loaded at system startup.

[0104] Preferred Channels vs. loading and regenerator-regenerator distance

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Load %	Route Length		
	< 1000 km	1000-2000 km	>2000 km
25 (200Ghz)	G1 1,5,9,13,81,85,89,93	G2 17,21,25,29,65,69,73,77	G3 33,37,41,45,49,53,57,61
	50 (100Ghz) 1,5,9,13,81,85,89,93, 3,7,9,15,83,87,91,95	G5 17,21,25,29,65,69,73,77, 19,23,27,31,67,71,75,79	G6 33,37,41,45,49,53,57,61, 35,39,43,47,51,55,59,63
15	>50 (50GHz) any 1-16 or 81-96	G8 any 17-32, 65-80	G9 Any 33-64

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[0105] In step 93, module 36 finds a λ set for the first regenerator path of the first link path, based on the fiber loading, and using the above table. The most desirable group of wavelengths are always considered first. If no wavelength can be found within this group, a group of wavelengths with greater reach than currently required is tried, but starting at the lower end of the group. If no wavelength group with greater reach exists, then a wavelength group with less reach can be used, but starting at the top end of this group. For example, the assignment can start with G3, if no wavelength can be found within this group, G6 is considered, then G9 and then G2.

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[0106] Let's consider again the example of Figure 4A, also assuming a less than 25% loading on the fiber.

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[0107] The length of the entire path (from node A to node Z) is 5500km. In the case of a regenerator path with k=0 (no regenerators), the signal has to reach 5500km. Using the table, the wavelengths with the greatest chance of driving this distance are those of group 3 (G3) which have approximately 200GHz spacing. If one of these wavelengths is not available continuously for the entire path, then wavelengths from G6 in the 50% loading section are considered (with approximately 100GHz spacing). If a continuous wavelength still does not exist, any wavelength from G9 in the >50% loading section is considered with approximately 50GHz spacing). If a continuous wavelength can still not be found, and since a group with a higher reach does not exist, group G2 will be used, starting with the top end of this group, which is wavelength 17. This process continues until a wavelength is found or every wavelength has been considered.

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[0108] Alternatively, non-table implementations may also be used. It is possible to use Q estimates for a given wavelength for a specific path.

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[0109] A variety of strategies may be devised for wavelength upgrades; the intent is to find a better wavelength than the one currently used. Preferably, such strategy needs to be driven by network cost and path setup time.

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[0110] RPM 35 builds the 1th path (see Figure 5B) as a one-regenerator path, with the regenerator placed at flexibility point C. Again, the >2000km wavelengths of G3 with a less than 25% loading are considered and if a wavelength can not be found, G2 will be used, starting with the top end of this group. If no wavelength can be found on the segment from node A to node C, the 1st path is flagged as incomplete. If a wavelength on the segment A - C is found, a search for a wavelength for segment C to Z begins.

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[0111] RPM 35 selected the 4th path as the best path for the 2 regenerators set. From Figure 5B, it can be seen that the 4th path requires a regenerator at flexibility points C and D. Segment A-C has 3000km, so the search for a wavelength begins again in G3. As in the previous case, if no wavelength is found then group G2 is considered. If no wavelength can be found for segments A-C, C-D and D-Z, the 4th path is flagged as incomplete. If a wavelength for segment A-C is found, then a search for a wavelength for segment C-D begins in group G2, and if this is successful, a search begins for a wavelength for segment D-Z in group G1 (D to Z is 500 km), until a wavelength set is found for the entire path, when the set is stored against the path data, step 97. If a wavelength set is not found for the respective regenerator path, branch NO of decision block 110, steps 95, 96 are performed and module 36 attempts to find a wavelength set for the next regenerator path.

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[0112] As also seen in Figure 5B the only path with 3 regenerators is the 5th path. As in the previous cases, the search starts with the first segment A-B and in the most desirable group, which is G2, for the second segment B-C in G1, for the third segment C-D in G2 and for the last link in G1. Same rule as above apply. If no wavelength can be found for segments A-B, B-C, C-D or D-Z, then the 5th regenerator path is flagged as incomplete, step 95.

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[0113] For the 0 and 1 regenerator path sets (k=0,1), wavelength upgrades may be provided for each segment of the path, as shown in step 99. Figure 9 illustrates the concept of wavelength upgrades. As shown in the above table, λ_{32} and λ_{43} are correct by suggested wavelengths for the given distances and link loading. I.e. λ_{32} is suitable for

section **A-C** which has 1500km, and λ_{42} is suitable for section **C-Z** which has 1850km. However, on setup, either or both fail. The solution is to upgrade the wavelengths rather than adding a regenerator, since a wavelength upgrade has a much lower cost.

[0114] Let's assume that wavelengths λ_{42} and λ_{44} are available for upgrade, step 99. Chances are that the path can be set-up if λ_{32} is upgraded to λ_{42} , which falls in the >2000km section of the table, as shown in step 110. However, no benefit can be obtained if λ_{43} is upgraded since it already falls within the >2000km section of the table. Hence, in the example shown in Figure 9, there is only one choice for a wavelength upgrade path, which is to upgrade the section **A-C**. There are three combinations for a one regenerator path for the segment, 8 upgrades combinations for 2 regenerator paths, 16 for 3 regenerator paths, etc. A selection is preferably made based on cost, step 111.

[0115] If however no upgrade set can be found, module 36 flags the regenerator path accordingly and begins assigning wavelengths to the next regenerator paths, step 110 and module 36 attempts to find a wavelength set for the next regenerator path. For $k>2$, a wavelength upgrade is only provided for the weakest segment along the path, where the weakest segment is defined as the segment with the lowest Q value.

[0116] Once module 36 has determined that all regenerator paths were allocated appropriate λ -sets, step 112, the completed regenerator paths are returned to the regenerator placement module 35, step 66 in Figure 4B, for path selection. If not, module 36 continues assigning λ -sets to the remaining regenerator paths.

[0117] Numerous other embodiments of the invention may be envisaged without departing from the scope of the invention, as defined by the claims.

Claims

1. A method for automatically routing and switching a connection in an automatically reconfigurable WDM network, comprising:

receiving a request to connect a source node with a destination node;
identifying a plurality of viable regenerator paths between said source and destination nodes, based on current constraints in said request and on current network configuration and loading; and
selecting a best path from said plurality of regenerator paths to serve said connection.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of engineering comprises:

constructing up to 'n' valid link paths for connecting said source node and said destination node based on constraints in said request and on the current network configuration;
for each valid link path, configuring up to 'm' groups of viable regenerator paths corresponding to a respective associated link path, based on current regenerator availability data and operational parameters of said regenerators;

wherein 'n' and 'm' are selected for said WDM network.

3. A method as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said step of selecting comprises sorting said viable regenerator paths based on an estimated performance parameter.

4. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein said estimated performance parameter is one of an estimated Q, a cost function and both said estimated Q and said cost function.

5. A method as claimed in claim 2, or any claim when dependent on claim 2, wherein said step of constructing up to 'n' valid link paths comprises:

constructing a path search tree comprising all link paths that originate at said source node and sink into said destination node, starting from said source node; and
for each link path, calculating a path weight and selecting said valid link paths according to said path weight.

6. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein said path weight is a path cost function.

7. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said constraints include: specific nodes that must be in a link path, specific nodes that must not be in a link path, specific links that must be in a link path, specific links that must not be in a link path, a link path that must be avoided, and a link path that must be followed.

8. A method as claimed in claim 2 or any claim when dependent on claim 2, wherein said step of configuring up to 'm' groups of viable regenerator paths comprises:

5 collecting regenerator availability data;
 constructing said viable regenerator paths including a regenerator at (k) nodes along said associated link path;
 and
 grouping said viable regenerator paths according to the number 'k' of regenerators.

10 9. A method as claimed in claim 2, or any claim when dependent on claim 2, wherein said step of configuring up to 'm' groups of viable regenerator paths comprises:

constructing a regenerator search tree for said associated link path, comprising all combinations of regenerator placement at intermediate nodes;
15 applying regenerator placement rules to said search tree to identify said viable regenerator paths; and
 assigning a set of wavelengths to each said viable regenerator path based on wavelength rules and on current network loading data.

20 10. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said step of selecting said best regenerator path comprises:

ordering said viable regenerator paths in a matrix according to the number of regenerators; and
determining said estimated performance parameter of each said viable regenerator path in said matrix in a specific sequence.

25 11. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein said specific sequence comprises estimating said performance parameter for each path in said matrix in order, beginning with a path with no regenerators.

30 12. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein said specific sequence is selected according to a probability of success function.

35 13. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising:

assigning a set of wavelengths to each said viable regenerator path based on wavelength rules and on current network loading; and
attempting to setup said connection along said best path.

40 14. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein said step of attempting to setup said connection comprises;

turning on said regenerator path based on a slow turn-on procedure for reducing transience in the network and allowing performance data collection for all established link paths that share a link with said best path; once said regenerator path is on, measuring an end-to-end performance parameter of said regenerator path and comparing same with a threshold; and
exchanging traffic between said source and destination nodes if said performance parameter is over said threshold.

45 15. A method as claimed in claim 14, further comprising, whenever said performance parameter is under said threshold:

50 changing a wavelength of said set with an upgraded wavelength or switching an additional regenerator in said regenerator path wavelength; and
attempting again to setup said connection.

16. A routing manager for an agile photonic WDM network comprising:

55 a routing module RM for constructing 'n' different valid link paths between a source and a destination node;
 a regenerator placement module RPM for engineering 'm' groups of viable regenerator paths for each said link path, each said group having 'k' regenerators;
 a wavelength assignment module WAM for assigning a set of wavelengths to each said viable regenerator

path; and

a control unit for receiving a request for establishing a connection between said source node and said destination node and managing operation of said RM, said **RPM** and said **WAM** for selecting a best path for said connection.

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17. A routing manager as claimed in claim 16 wherein said RM constructs a path search tree based on node and connectivity data received from a topology database and on constraints included in said request.

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18. A routing manager as claimed in claim 16 or 17, wherein said RPM estimates performance of all said regenerator paths using a Q calculator.

19. A method for automatically switching and routing a connection over a reconfigurable photonic network comprising:

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maintaining updated information on status and operation parameters of a bank of wavelength-converter/regenerator devices connected in stand-by at a plurality of switching nodes of said photonic network; investigating availability of said devices to locate a device based on said updated information; and switching said devices into a communication path according to a current performance parameter of said communication path.

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20. A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein said performance parameter is Q.

21. A system for managing a wavelength switched optical network, by carrying out the method of any of claims 1 to 15, 19 or 20.

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21. A method of offering to users a data transmission service over a WDM network having the system of any of claims 16 to 18 or 21.

22. A method of transmitting data by a user over a WDM network having the system of any of claims 16 to 18 or 21.

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FIGURE 1

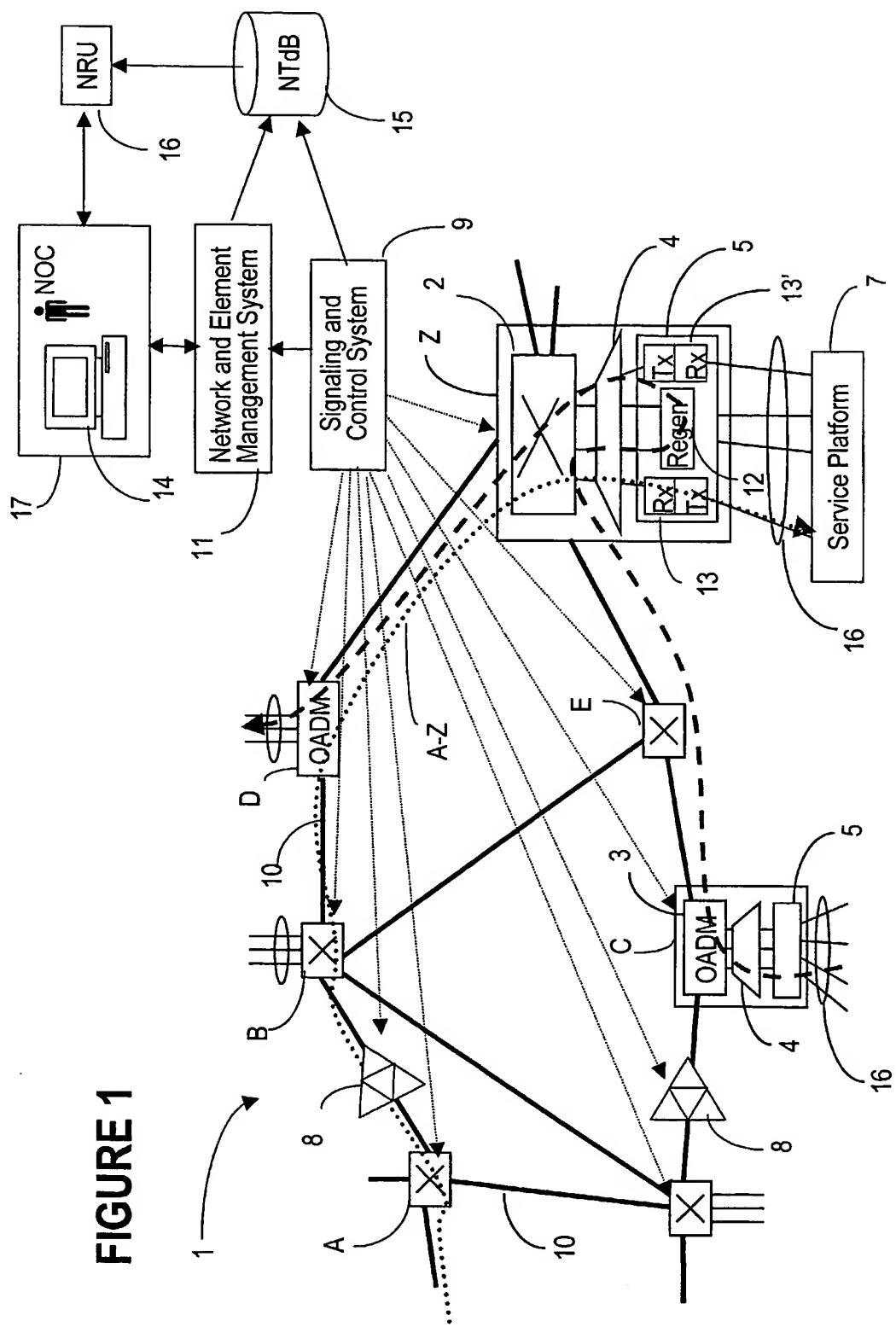
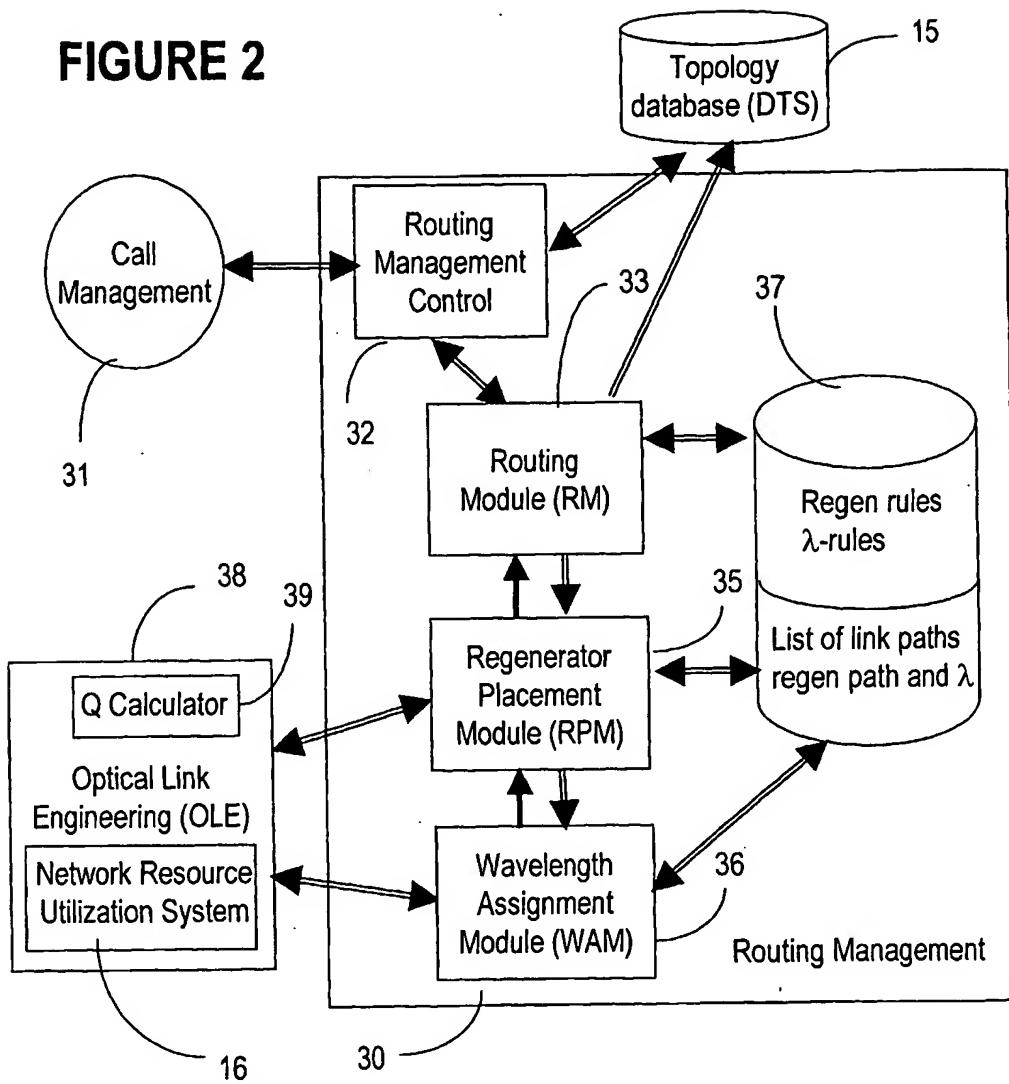
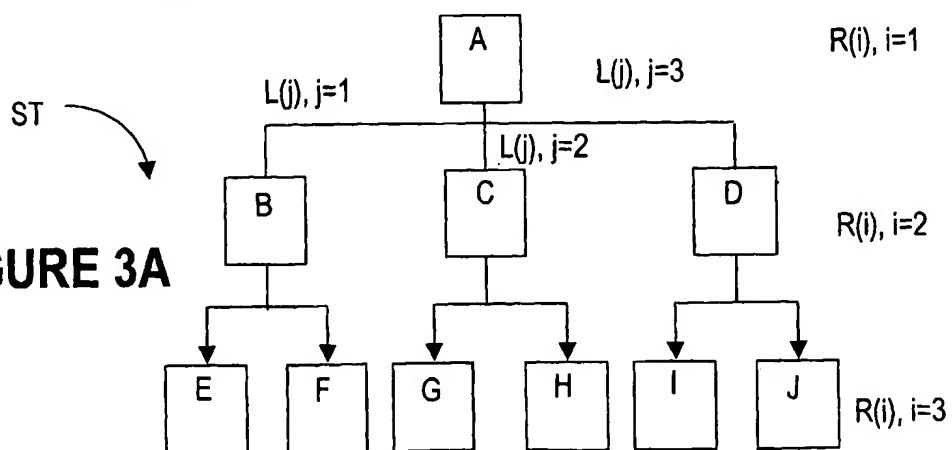


FIGURE 2**FIGURE 3A**

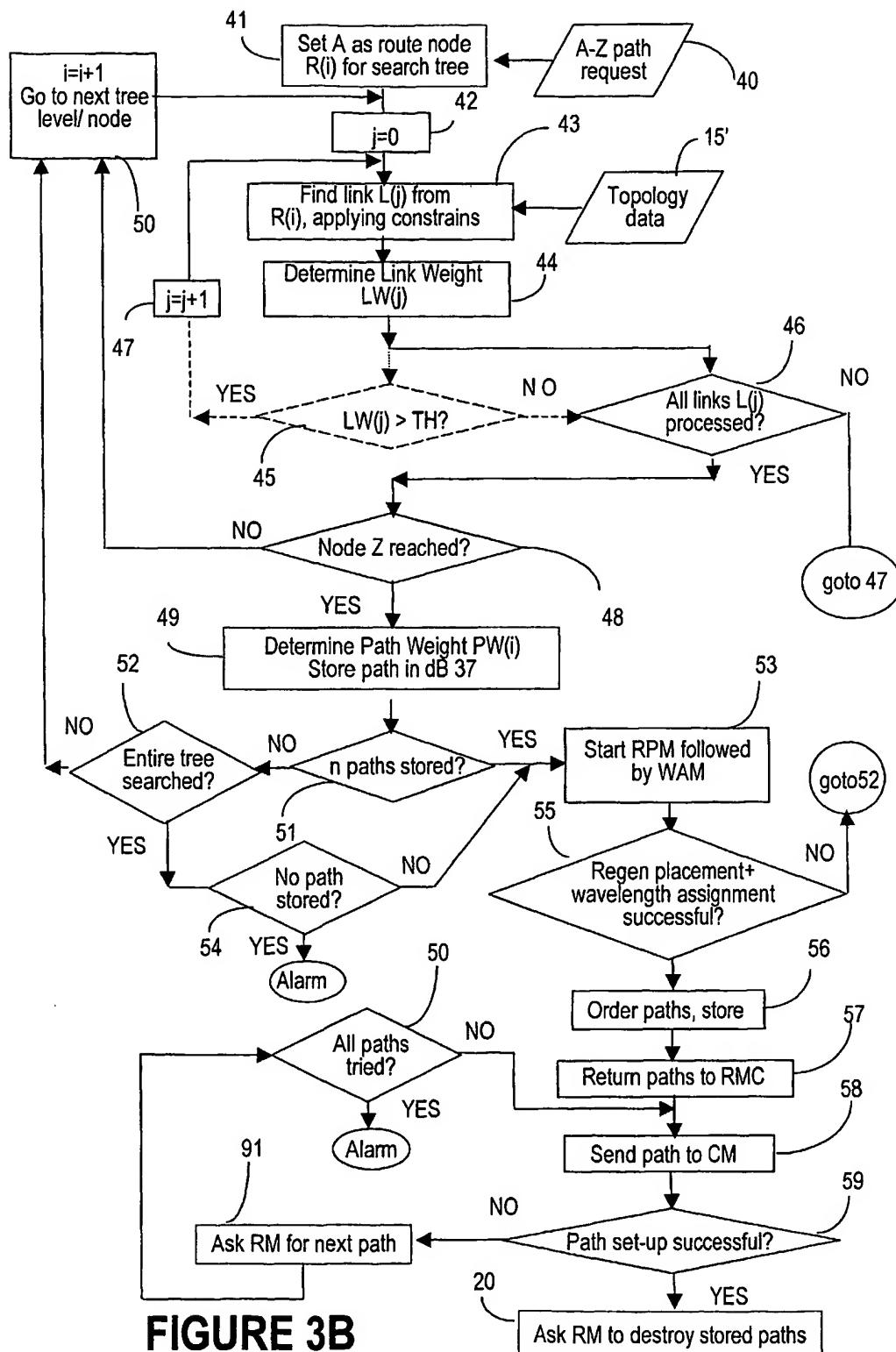
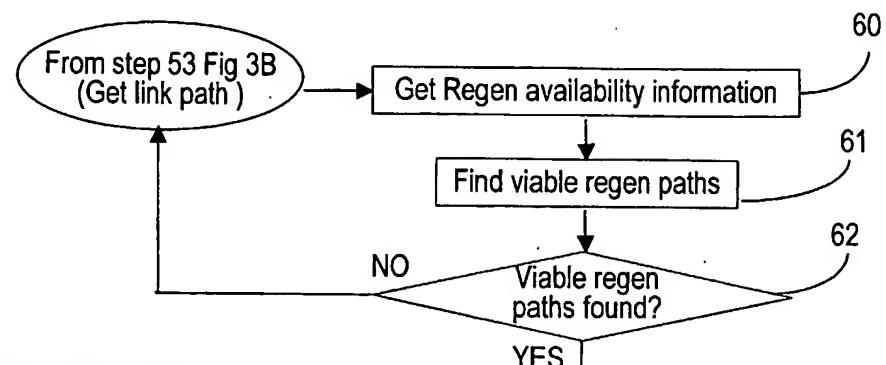
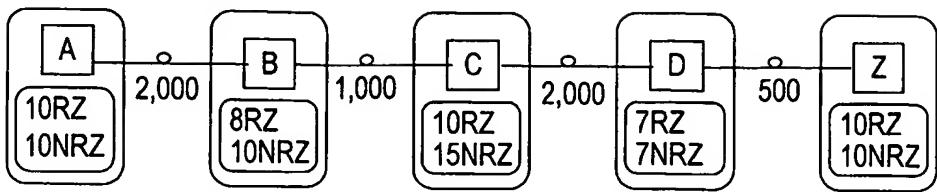
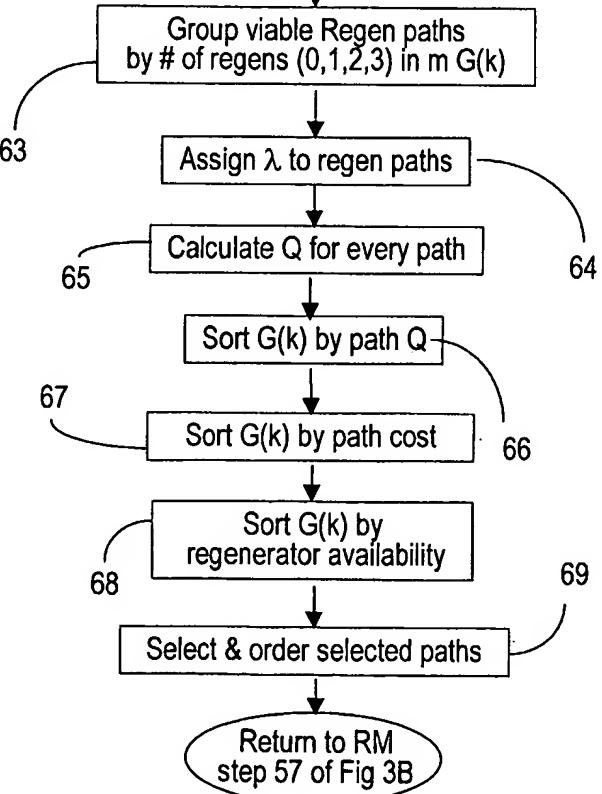
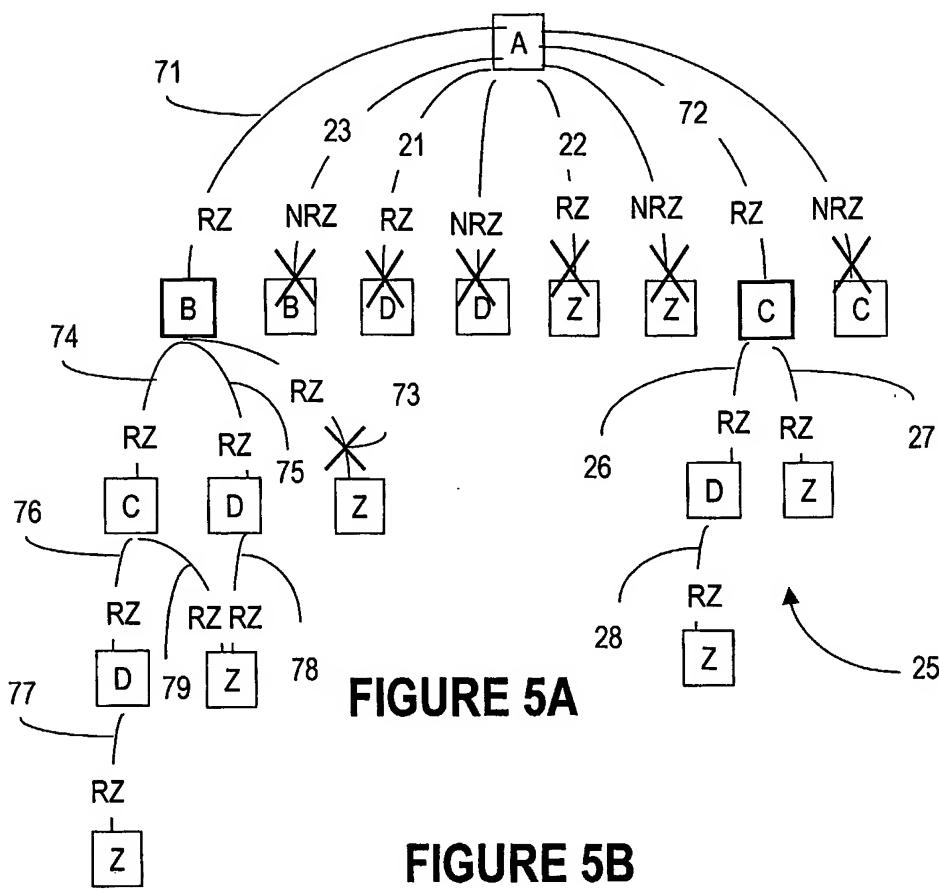
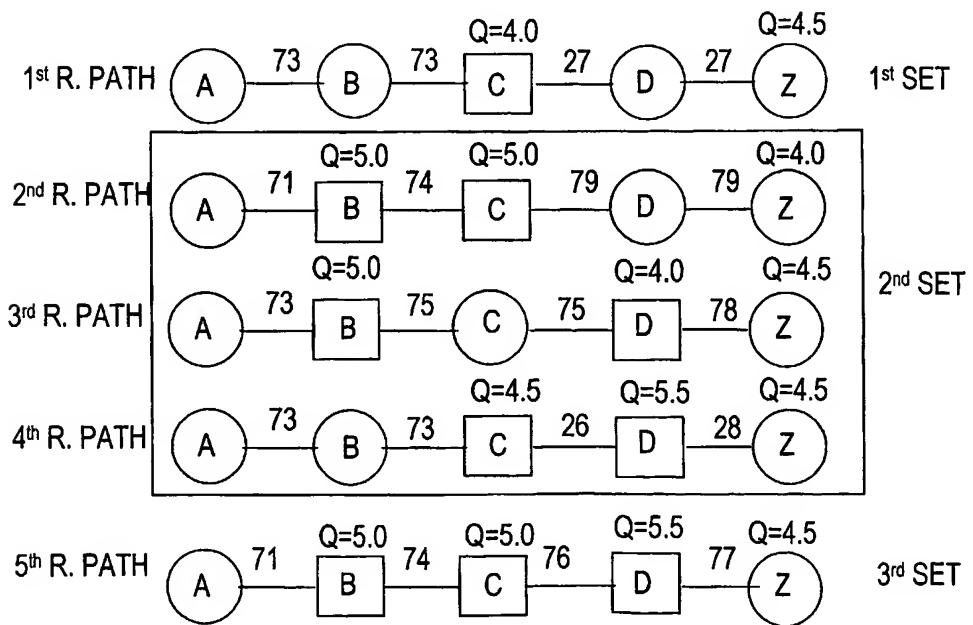
**FIGURE 3B**

FIGURE 4A**FIGURE 4B**

**FIGURE 5B**

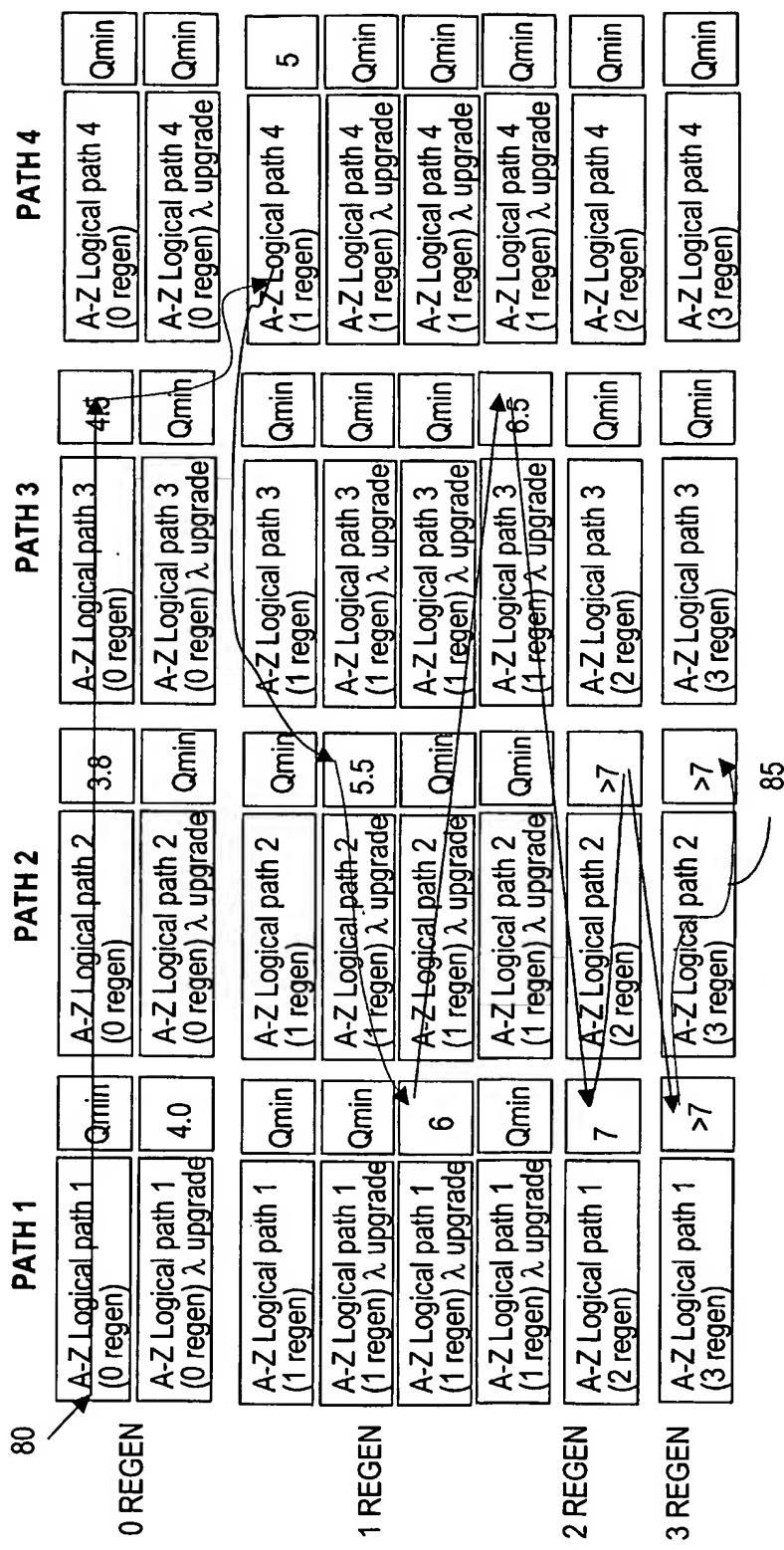
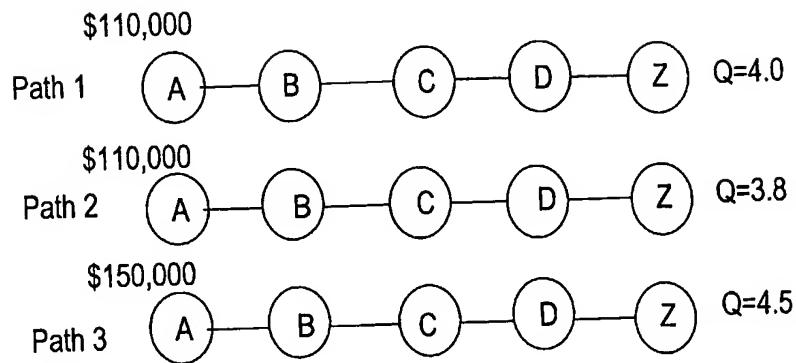
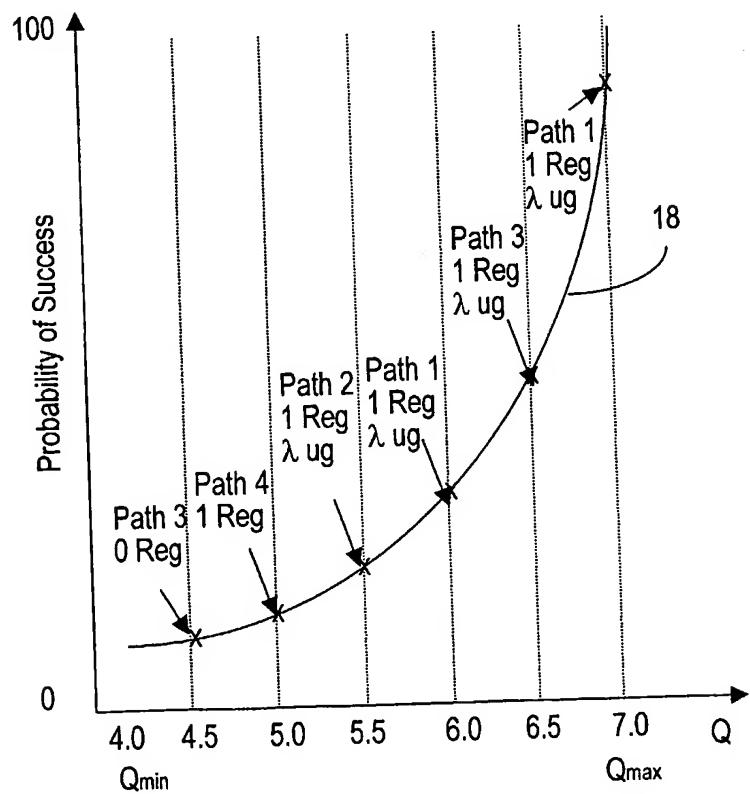


FIGURE 6A

FIGURE 6B**FIGURE 6C**

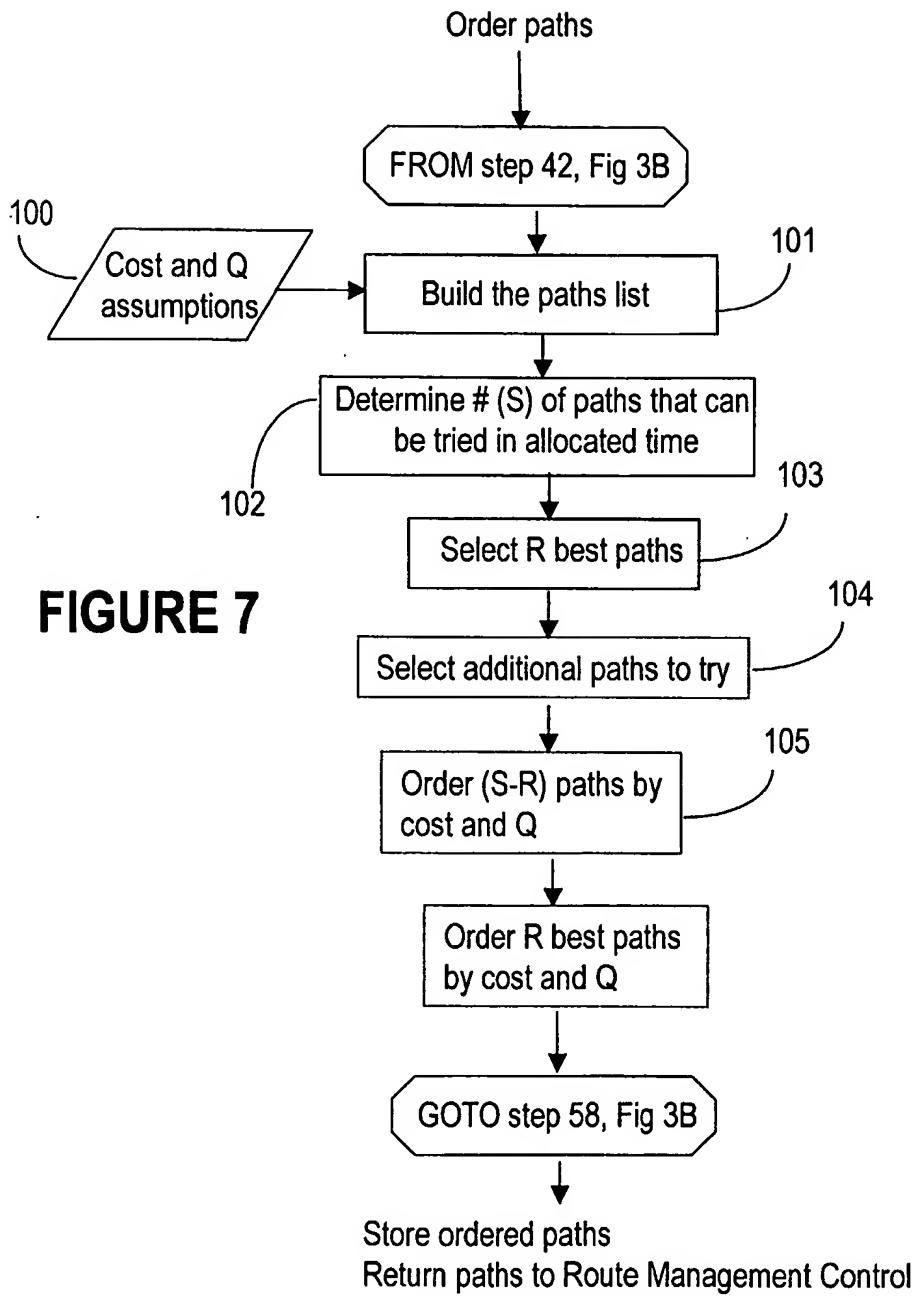
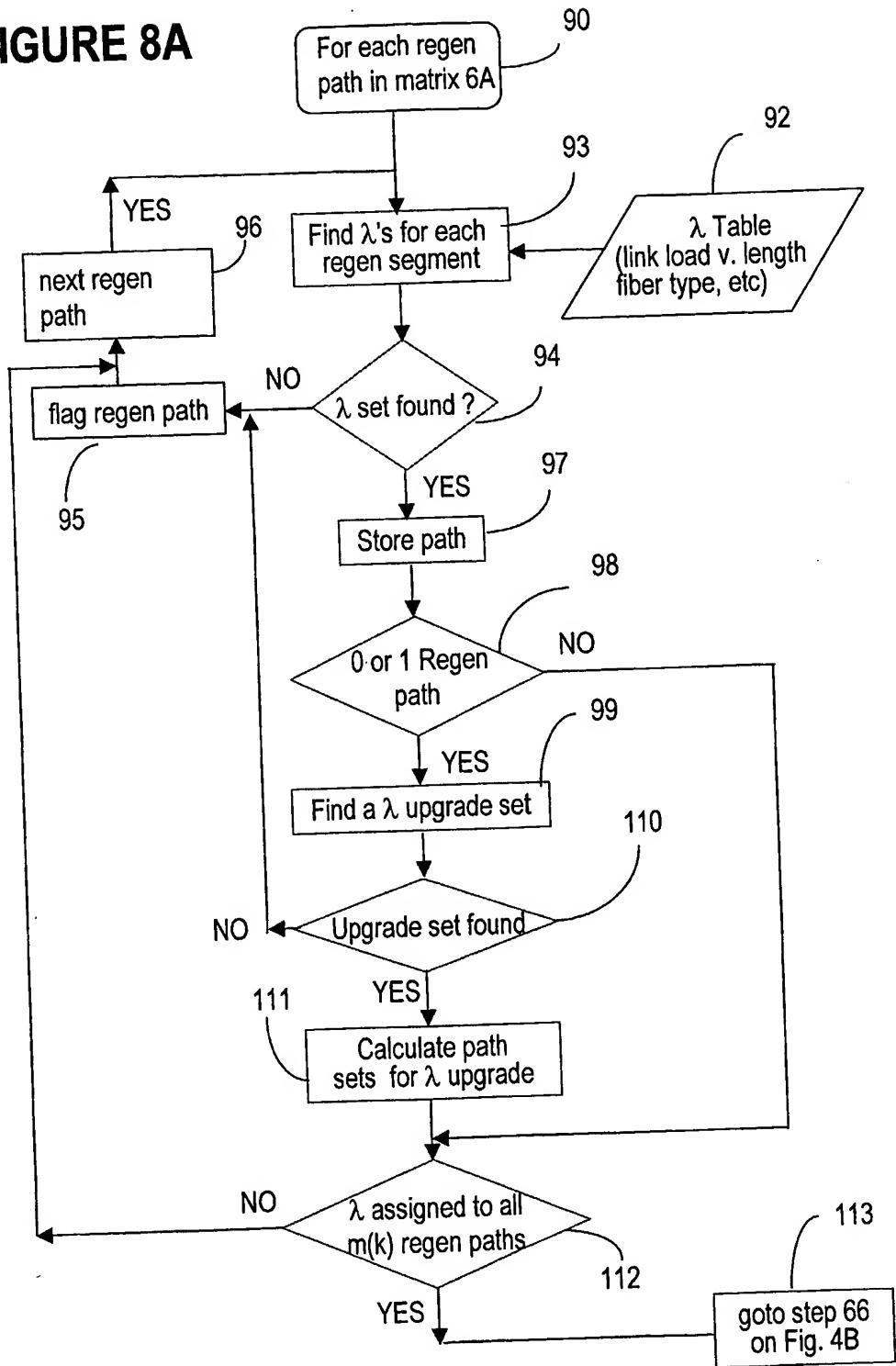
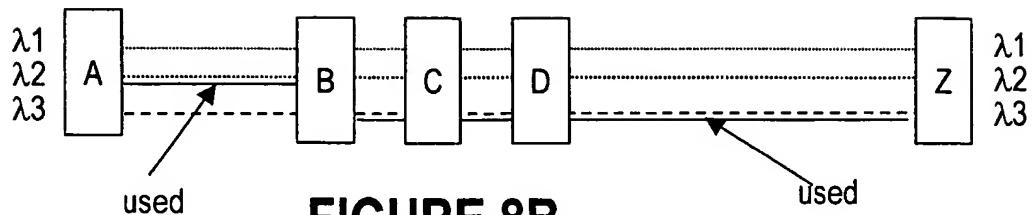
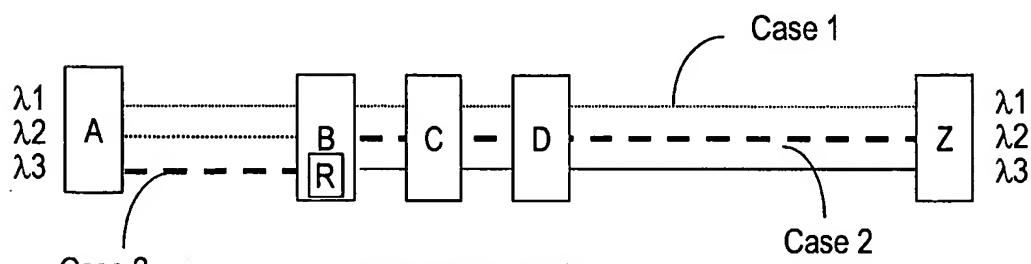
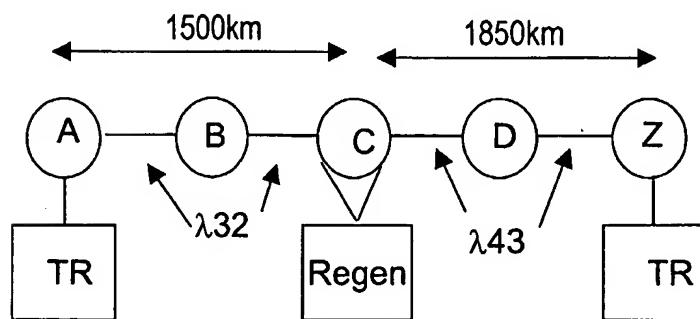


FIGURE 8A

**FIGURE 8B****FIGURE 8C****FIGURE 9**

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